

News Release

JCEA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2009

For additional information contact:

Kerrie Dallman, President: 303-232-6405

Dexter Meyer, Director of Communications: 303-232-6405

Jeffco teachers declare bargaining impasse

The Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA) has declared that negotiations between the 4,200 member teacher union and Jeffco Public Schools are at an impasse. The JCEA Council, the Association's policy-making body of 170 school-based teacher leaders, has voted overwhelmingly to reject the school district's last offer and to move directly to mediation/fact-finding, as per the process outlined in the contract. The current contract, which expires in 2011, allows for annual negotiations over "compensation items" and other items as agreed to by the parties.

JCEA President Kerrie Dallman said, "Jeffco teachers are extremely disappointed by the district's last salary offer which fails to provide any thing close to a cost of living increase. That is unacceptable and not warranted given the district's financial situation. We are upset, angry and very, very frustrated."

Dallman explained that the school district's last offer was for a one-time only 1% "stipend." The proposed stipend would range from a low of about \$350 (for a second year teacher with a BA) to a high of \$800 (a twenty-eight year teacher with post graduate work, including an MA). The offer also includes maintenance of the existing salary schedule, but approximately 25-30% of Jeffco teachers do not receive any salary increase from that schedule. Therefore, the only salary increase they receive is from some form of COLA. This would also mean that teachers hired for the fall of 2009 would be paid the same starting salary as those hired in 2008, making it more difficult for JPS to compete in the recruitment of high quality new teachers.

Dallman said, "Jeffco teachers just aren't buying the district's argument that they can't afford fair and reasonable salary increases. The truth is the district received a 4.9% funding increase from the legislature to cover employee salaries and other operational costs. It also received nearly \$15 million in federal stimulus funds to protect jobs and support school improvement. But most significantly, the district has \$160 million in operating reserves— \$57 million more than even they projected they needed in 2006. I am guessing that Jeffco taxpayers would not be too happy to learn that some of their hard earned money is being hoarded by the school district for some unknown rainy-day expense in the future. Socking money away for a rainy day can be reasonable and prudent. Hoarding more than you expected and more than you need is unreasonable and imprudent."

As the largest employer in Jefferson County, the district has an opportunity to help stimulate the local economy by giving employees a cost of living increase that will in turn go to support local businesses and be reinvested in our state economy.

"President Obama has repeatedly stated that stimulus dollars need to be used to stimulate the sluggish economy and restore jobs rather than be hoarded for a rainy day or spent on expanding existing programs," Dallman said. "The fact is that rainy day is here! Obviously the district has the ability— but not the will—to pay teachers fair and reasonable salaries."

Dallman also explained that compensation is only part of the reason for teacher unrest in Jeffco. Teachers are growing increasingly concerned about how decisions are being made at both the district and school levels. Their voices are not being heard. As a result, they are spending less time planning for and working directly with students, while spending more time testing and completing time-consuming district mandates.

"Our members have hit the proverbial workload wall," Dallman said. "They want the school district to stop mandating programs, stop expanding pet programs, and stop top-down decision making. They want the administration to start listening to those professionals who actually do the work of teaching our students in our classrooms, our teachers. And, they want to be paid for their hard work, training, expertise and dedication."

Dallman is a social studies teacher on leave from Pomona High School. JCEA, affiliated with the Colorado Education Association (CEA) and the National Education Association (NEA), represents about 5,700 teachers in Jeffco Public Schools, the state's largest school district.

###

Jefferson County Education Association

1447 Nelson St., Lakewood, CO 80215

Phone: 303-232-6405 • FAX: 303-238-2215 • Web site: www.jcea-cea.org